

• MEMORANDUM FOR:

ATC NIOs

Attached is a sample of the work that Harry Cochran will be doing for me. It comes too late to be useful to you in this month's cycle of meetings, but I plan to have such a paper or papers available in time for your use next month. Our hope is that through this device we can give you some raw meat to throw to your troops in the meetings, although we recognize that most of the time you will be addressing these subjects anyway. We would welcome any comments.

Richard Lehman
NIO for Warning

Attachment

Date 20 June 1979

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18 June 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO for Warning

SUBJECT : Alternate Hypotheses, Questions, and Other Provocations

I. The Soviet Predicament in Afghanistan: An Alternate Hypothesis

Brezhnev's public pledge on 11 June that the USSR will "not abandon in trouble our friend—the Afghan people" should be taken at face value as a warning that Moscow will take whatever measures are necessary to protect its geopolitical interests in Afghanistan. This decision to commit Brezhnev's personal authority in the cause of defending the "Afghan revolution" undoubtedly contains a large element of bluff. As such, it is an extension of Moscow's efforts during the past three months to intimidate Pakistan and Iran and discourage external assistance to the Afghan rebels. But Brezhnev's intervention also signifies a more fundamental perception that Soviet actions in support of the Taraki regime, particularly since the conclusion of the Soviet-Afghan Treaty last December, have engaged the USSR's prestige and credibility so deeply that it now has no choice but to avert an outcome which would be viewed abroad (and at home) as a clear defeat for Soviet policy.

It is true that the Soviets have passed up several recent opportunities to voice support for Taraki and his government and that this reflects an anxious concern to avoid as long as possible an irrevocable commitment to the Kabul regime as currently structured. But it is only a matter of prudence, under prevailing circumstances, to refrain from foreclosing the option of replacing Taraki and Amin with other leaders who could be relied upon to accept Soviet direction and protect Soviet equities. Moscow's predicament, of course, resides in the difficulty of finding

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plausible alternatives to the present leadership, particularly since the Khalqi purges of the rival Parcham faction.

The report

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suggests that the Soviets are exploring the possibility of negotiating some kind of accommodation, however temporary, with the insurgents. However, in view of the trends in the civil war which increasingly favor the rebels, this option would seem to have minimal chances of success because, if for no other reason, the rebels have little incentive to negotiate a compromise settlement with the beleaguered and progressively weakening Taraki regime.

This hypothesis rests on the proposition that events have already passed beyond the point where the Soviets might salvage their investment in the present Kabul regime by playing the cards of a negotiated compromise settlement, deterring Pakistani support for the rebels by activating local assets in Baluchistan province, or sharpening diplomatic pressure on Pakistan. Ambassador Azimov has played his final card in the intimidation game by warning General Zia that, depending on the circumstances, the USSR would reserve the right to intervene militarily on the basis of Soviet-Afghan accords. The threat to unleash Afghan forces against Pakistan, moreover, simply lacks credibility and will not impress Gen. Zia. Large numbers of Pakistani tribesmen are crossing into Afghanistan to support fellow tribesmen.

In sum, the Soviets have already exhausted most, if not all, of their alternatives to a show of force to protect their self-created stake in the Afghan "revolution." They must now confront the consequences of a serious miscalculation with respect to the Taraki regime's strength and long-term prospects. The mystery is how the Soviets could have deluded themselves that a "people's revolution" lacking an effective party apparatus could consolidate its grip on a primitive country of Islamic tribesmen.

The fundamental reality is that the Soviet superpower is saddled with a rapidly failing investment and that Moscow is both unable and unwilling to disengage or cut its losses. The pattern of Soviet behavior since General Yepishev's mission in April has been to escalate commitments in a desperate attempt to keep pace with and counter insurgent gains. [REDACTED]

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end to this cycle is not in sight.

The Soviet leaders seem to have come to believe that they face an unavoidable choice between defeat and some form of military intervention. They are now building a justification for intervention, although they probably have not made final decisions with respect to the timing and scope of these operations. Brezhnev on 11 June portrayed the central issue in the contest for power in Afghanistan as foreign "covert and overt attempts at interfering in Afghan internal affairs"; Kosygin told Indian newsmen that the Soviet Union intends to "protect" Afghanistan; and TASS has charged that American, Chinese and Pakistani instructors are training Afghan rebels and providing their weapons.

The immediate requirement for warning intelligence is to assess the timing and nature of Soviet military options. The judgments in the Special Report of 5 June should be reexamined and updated. The judgment that the Soviets "probably would not send in ground forces to restore order throughout the country" remains plausible, but it seems unlikely that Moscow, under any circumstances, would contemplate what would in effect be a military occupation of the entire country. On the other hand, it is questionable that the Soviets would judge that intervention limited to the "dispatch of an airmobile combat team to hold Kabul for the Taraki regime" would be an adequate response to a situation that seems likely to confront them in the very near future.

The "political" argument that the Soviets will refrain from actions anywhere which, in their view, would jeopardize Senate approval of SALT II

should also be reexamined: for example, the possibility that Brezhnev's refusal to come to Washington for the summit meeting signifies more than a desire to protect his fragile health by avoiding long captivity in a Soviet airliner. Have the Soviets come to believe that the odds are strongly against Senate approval of SALT II, or that approval will be conditioned on Soviet consent to unacceptable amendments? Are they proceeding on the assumption that they can live with a situation in which both powers, following the precedent of SALT I since that agreement expired last October, will, in their own interests, tacitly observe the terms of SALT II despite its failure to be ratified? (President Carter's statement in this regard will not have escaped Soviet attention.)

Although there are impressive arguments against a Soviet decision to opt for large-scale military intervention , the Soviets, impelled by familiar great power anxieties over prestige and the credibility of commitments in what they regard as a sensitive area, may persuade themselves that the chaotic situation in Afghanistan can be mastered by measures well short of "massive intervention," and that forceful Soviet action, at the "request" of the Kabul regime, will not only protect a highly valued geopolitical stake but remove the negative impression of Soviet resolve created by their ambiguous performance in reaction to China's invasion of Vietnam.

II. Sino-Soviet Negotiations: Vietnam Linkage--An Alternate Hypothesis

The May-June community consensus that Sino-Soviet talks will not yield meaningful change in the near future—at least nothing more than a limited reduction in tension—focussed essentially on the bilateral relationship. An alternate hypothesis builds on the proposition that China's motivation in proposing talks in a new forum was not to manipulate the Sino-Soviet-US triangle in the conventional way but rather to engage the Soviets in negotiations in order to hold their feet to the fire on one of the PRC's leading foreign policy preoccupations—how to cope with the Soviet-Vietnamese position of strength in Indochina. The "punitive" action in February-March yielded few if any dividends in dealing with Hanoi's defiance, pretensions, and presence in Kampuchea or in loosening its alignment with the Soviet Union.

This hypothesis suggests that the Chinese do not intend to use the talks with the Soviets to wheedle more attractive terms from the US and Japan on trade, credits, technology transfers, or Taiwan, but to maneuver Moscow into an awkward and indefensible position with respect to its support for Vietnamese ambitions and policies. The Chinese, in this scenario, intend to turn Soviet advocacy of a joint statement of "principles" governing bilateral relations against Moscow by conditioning acceptance of an anodyne joint statement on Soviet willingness to join China and other powers (including the US) in working out a "compromise solution" on Kampuchea which would replace both the Pol Pot and Heng Samrin regimes with a "neutral" government (the Sihanouk card) and require the withdrawal of foreign (Vietnamese) forces from Kampuchea.

The Chinese presumably believe they can count on US, ASEAN, and other foreign support for this approach. They have no illusions that such a "compromise solution" would be acceptable to Moscow and Hanoi, at least in the foreseeable future, but the Chinese are confident that an ostensibly reasonable and statesmanlike proposal would have wide appeal abroad and give them an effective political warfare weapon against the Soviets and Vietnamese.

This line of thinking was implicit [redacted]

who said the PRC holds the initiative in Sino-Soviet negotiations and that Hanoi's posture in the next round of Sino-Vietnamese talks will be the "key factor" in Chinese policy planning regarding negotiations with Moscow. He indicated that the PRC was not prepared to play its "Soviet card" yet and will base future policy on "timeliness." Soviet intentions, he said, would be gauged by Hanoi's attitude. Getting down to the central issue, [redacted]

[redacted] China does not expect Vietnam to accept all of China's eight points but Hanoi, at a minimum, must agree to cease interfering in internal Kampuchean politics.

In sum, the PRC in proposing negotiations is laying a trap for the Soviets. When Moscow, as expected, righteously refuse^s to make Vietnamese policies and interests a subject of Sino-Soviet bargaining, the Chinese will claim this exposes Moscow's sinister aims in supporting the "regional hegemonists" in Hanoi and proves that the Soviets have no genuine interest in improving relations with China.

The other side of this coin is that the Soviets may be sandbagged if they enter negotiations on the assumption that talks can be manipulated to create an impression of more benign relations which will influence US, Japanese and European policies toward China.

China's foremost objective in Southeast Asia is to block further foreign recognition of the Heng Samrin regime and, in this way, to hold open the long-term option of a concerted international effort to arrange a "compromise solution" in Kampuchea. (Prime Minister Desai reportedly has decided not to recognize the PRK now because of ASEAN pressures [redacted])

[redacted]
[redacted] If the Vietnamese succeed in a gradual attrition of Pol Pot's forces and credibility, time will then work against

China. The Chinese therefore must seek to maintain the PRK's isolation by keeping international attention focused on Vietnam's "occupation" of Kampuchea. Injecting a Vietnam linkage into the Sino-Soviet negotiations offers an effective forum for achieving this objective.

III. Iraq-Iran: Drift toward confrontation?

The latent antagonism between the two countries has surfaced in the last few weeks and the dynamics of mutually provocative activities may trigger ~~a~~ ^a process of escalation which will carry both Baghdad and Tehran well beyond what they conceive to be their present interests and imperatives. They are engaged in a competitive action/reaction cycle which affects highly sensitive matters of domestic security and territorial integrity. Tehran must view Iraqi efforts to exploit Arab unrest and demands in Khuzestan province as a serious threat to Iran's integrity. Iranian attempts to stir up a challenge to the Baghdad regime within the Shi'a majority in Iraq poses a parallel threat to Iraq.

A warning assessment might address the following:

1. Chances that the weakness and chaos of central authority in Iran will tempt Iraq to revive claims that were relinquished in the 1975 agreement with the Shah regarding the dividing line in the Shatt al Arab, Khuzestan province ("Arabistan"), islands in the "Arabian Gulf," Kuwait.

2. Danger that the Iraqis, in view of Iranian military/political confusion and ~~weakness~~, will miscalculate and overreach in applying pressure on Tehran. (Was Iraqi bombing/strafing of border towns and activation of the 5th Mechanized Division intended as a warning to Tehran to refrain from agitation within Iraq's Shi'a population?)

3. Is Baghdad preparing for further bold action to exploit Iran's vulnerabilities? Beyond the obvious precaution against a sacking of the mission, what is the significance of the Iraqi embassy's reported destruction of documents and return of families to Baghdad?

/V. Iran: Will external threats trigger a challenge to Khomeini?

Will the Iranian perception of growing dangers posed by Iraqi ambitions and irredentism provide a catalyst for a serious challenge to Khomeini?

Will the Iraqi threat generate efforts to cope with vulnerabilities to external pressures created by Khomeini's erratic and arbitrary rule?

(Note the unconfirmed report of a plot to overthrow him involving Barzargan, Ayatollah Taleghani, Ali Shariat-Madari and son.) Will further deterioration of relations with Iraq, including border fighting and mutual reprisals against Iraqi Shi^a's and Iranian Arabs, impel Khomeini's disparate opponents to unite in a bid to overthrow him? Might Iraqi assertions of the right to "protect" the Arab population of Khuzestan escalate into a confrontation which would disrupt Iranian oil production?

VII. Arab Rejection Front: Is there an incipient shift by Syria/Iraq toward higher risk tactics in reacting to Israeli operations in Lebanon?

Might the Syrians, backed and prodded by Iraq, perceive the early difficulties in Israeli-Egyptian negotiations on West Bank/Gaza autonomy, the blunt reaffirmations by Begin, Dayan, Weizman, and Sharon of Israel's right to establish further (unlimited) settlements in the West Bank, and acerbic reactions in the Cairo press, as creating an opportunity for bold actions to derail the negotiations, discredit Sadat's policy, and make it difficult for Cairo to continue the talks? Are the Syrians preparing to stage a bluff or provocation to lure the Israelis into an air battle and/or reprisals against Syrian bases or forces? Do recent Syrian fighter reactions

deep into Lebanese airspace foreshadow a shift in Syria's risk calculus?

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Might the Syrians be gambling that by creating an appearance of greater willingness to engage Israeli aircraft, they can prompt the US to apply pressure on the Israelis to scale down their activities in Lebanon across the board?

More broadly, have the Syrians decided that higher risk actions are necessary to arrest developments that can only further prejudice their prospects of recovering the Golan? Is there any link between the recent shift in Syrian air reactions and Israel's announcement that it has placed 24 Jewish settlements on the Golan—a move which in Syrian eyes must be an ominous sign of Israel's long-term intention to annex the Golan? If Damascus, for whatever reason, feels under heightened pressure to halt the trend toward annexation before it becomes completely irreversible, what ~~other~~ alternatives might the Syrians perceive other than to raise a credible threat of an explosive confrontation?

VI. Western Sahara: Growing Risk of Moroccan-Algerian hostilities?

Do the Polisario attacks during the first half of June on Moroccan units within southern Morocco mark a significant escalation in the struggle? Might King Hassan be compelled, perhaps against his better judgment, to authorize military reprisals against Polisario bases in Algeria? Could his order that Moroccan troops exercise the "right of pursuit" against Polisario forces if civilian lives are threatened trigger a rapid escalation? Are the new Algerian leaders seeking to provoke Hassan into an overreaction?

VII~~4~~. Rhodesia: Race for recognition?

The elections and installation of Muzorewa have introduced a new element in the contest which will work against the long-term prospects of the Patriotic Front and create powerful new incentives for measures to check this threat. [redacted] defined the Front's fundamental problem succinctly when he acknowledged that if Muzorewa survives until next year, a number of African states will recognize him and thereby strengthen his government's hold on power.

Current intelligence assessments continue to express skepticism that recent events in Salisbury will finally impel ZAPU and ZANU to subordinate their rivalry and differences in the interest of countering new dangers to their future prospects. Are these assessments too complacent in discounting significant progress toward implementing the Addis Ababa agreements? Do they take sufficient account of new incentives for concerted action, if not "unification?"

If the Popular Front can neither overthrow the Salisbury regime by force nor negotiate a political settlement with it (because Muzorewa has no incentive to negotiate), what options remain? If the PF's main short-term concern is to forestall foreign recognition of Muzorewa by other African states and the lifting of economic sanctions, has the idea of a government-in-exile become more attractive? In addition to discouraging foreign recognition of Salisbury, might the PF see a government-in-exile as more urgent now as a means of eroding the discipline and loyalty of Salisbury's security forces? —and as accelerating the white exodus? In this context, what is the significance of Nkomo's removal of virtually all Shona members of ZAPU's military high command? If ZAPU and ZANU, under the prod of events in Salisbury, the Tory victory, and the Senate votes, are now more ready to move, might Nyerere and Machel be more favorably disposed to join Kaunda in endorsing a PF provisional government soon?

VIII.

~~IX.~~ Nicaragua: The race for succession—Will Cuba intervene to support the FSIN's bid for power?

This hypothetical scenario rests on the assumption that the FSIN and their Cuban backers anticipate that the US and other OAS members will organize a diplomatic/military intervention to arrange a "compromise solution" that would avert a Sandinista takeover. The FSIN presumably is aware of proposals, such as those expressed by Foreign Minister Quintana, for an OAS peace force and a negotiating commission. In this situation, the Sandinistas may conclude they cannot afford to wait in the hope that guerrilla tactics will stretch GN capabilities to the breaking point and oblige Somoza to resign.

The Sandinistas' announcement of a junta to lead a provisional government in the southwest and their new offensive to capture Rivas suggest a belief that the time has come for pre-emptive action. The stage is being set for an appeal by the provisional government for Cuban and possibly other foreign intervention to forestall US/OAS moves to deprive the FSIN of the fruits of its military victories and sacrifices.

With events moving rapidly toward a final test of strength, Castro may be strongly tempted to undertake a bold diplomatic and military intervention on behalf of, and at the request of, the FSIN provisional government. He may be encouraged to gamble by his reading of the growing sentiment in the OAS that Somoza should resign. Castro, moreover, may persuade himself that the risks

of audacious action have been significantly reduced by the attitudes of Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru and other Latin American governments. He may calculate that the rapid deployment to the provisional government's "liberated zone" of a Cuban "praetorian guard" would yield high dividends for Cuba's prestige in Latin America and the Third World and greatly enhance its ability to support challenges to other Central American regimes, particularly in El Salvador.

The Cubans may not be alone in contemplating at least token military intervention.

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Is the race for succession to be accompanied by a race for intervention?